

112TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 536

Condemning the murder of Wilman Villar Mendoza and honoring his sacrifice
in the cause of freedom for the Cuban people.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 2, 2012

Mr. DIAZ-BALART (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. SIRES, and Mr. RIVERA) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Condemning the murder of Wilman Villar Mendoza and honoring his sacrifice in the cause of freedom for the Cuban people.

Whereas Wilman Villar Mendoza, a pro-democracy activist, subsequent prisoner of conscience, husband, and father of two young children, died at the hands of the brutal Castro dictatorship on January 19, 2012, after suffering inhumane treatment, beatings, and abhorrent prison conditions;

Whereas Villar Mendoza was a member of the Cuban Patriotic Union and was arrested in Contramaestre on November 14, 2011, for protesting against the totalitarian regime in Cuba and demanding basic human rights and lib-

erty, and was sentenced to four years in prison for “contempt”;

Whereas Villar Mendoza began a hunger strike that lasted more than 50 days, was transferred to the infamous Aguadores prison on January 13, 2012, and was reportedly kept naked in solitary confinement in a humid prison cell, deprived of water and medical treatment;

Whereas he was transferred to Juan Bruno Zayas Hospital in Santiago and, while he languished in a coma, dying of pneumonia and multiple organ failures;

Whereas the Cuban regime locked down the hospital to prevent family members, friends, and fellow activists from visiting the dying Villar Mendoza;

Whereas the regime in Cuba reportedly has brutally beaten and harassed Villar Mendoza’s wife, Maritza Pelegrino Cabrales, for her participation in the women’s democracy group the Ladies in White, and has threatened to take away her children if she does not abandon the group;

Whereas representatives of many foreign governments condemned Cuba’s egregious human rights abuses, its brutality, and the death of Villar Mendoza;

Whereas Vice President and spokesperson of the Spanish Government, Soraya Sáenz de Santamaría, expressed the nation’s consternation over Villar Mendoza’s death and called on the regime to release all political prisoners declaring, “The defense of human rights and freedoms will be a constant in Spanish foreign policy, especially in the case of Cuba”;

Whereas the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Karel Schwarzenberg released a statement lamenting Villar Mendoza’s death and declared, “Czechs regret

every loss of life of those, who as Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc, sacrificed their lives for values as human rights, personal dignity and political freedom”;

Whereas the Foreign Ministry of Slovakia condemned Villar Mendoza’s murder and called on the regime to respect basic human rights stating, “What happened again points to the necessity for Cuba to guarantee human rights to its citizens and enable them to express all their non-violent political thoughts freely”;

Whereas the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland expressed its condolences to Villar Mendoza’s family and announced that, “Poland reiterates its plea to Cuban authorities to stop acts that violate human rights”;

Whereas Amnesty International Special Advisor Javier Zúñiga declared, “The responsibility for Wilman Villar Mendoza’s death in custody lies squarely with the Cuban authorities, who summarily judged and jailed him for exercising his right to freedom of expression. His tragic death highlights the depths of despair faced by the other prisoners of conscience still languishing in Cuban jails, who must be released immediately and unconditionally. The Cuban authorities must stop the harassment, persecution, and imprisonment of peaceful demonstrators as well as political and human rights activists”;

Whereas José Miguel Vivanco, the Americas Director at Human Rights Watch, condemned the inhumane treatment of Villar Mendoza and other dissidents by saying, “Villar Mendoza’s case shows how the Cuban government punishes dissent. Arbitrary arrests, sham trials, inhumane imprisonment, and harassment of dissidents’ families—these are the tactics used to silence critics”;

Whereas the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation reports that repression in Cuba increased dramatically as there were a total of 4,123 arrests in 2011, which is about double the 2,074 arrests in 2010, and there was a reported total of 786 political arrests in December 2011 alone;

Whereas international human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have called on the regime to end its violent arrests and brutal crackdown on Cubans for simply expressing their views, with Human Rights Watch summarizing conditions in Cuba in its 2012 report stating, “In 2011 Raúl Castro’s government continued to enforce political conformity using short-term detentions, beatings, public acts of repudiation, forced exile, and travel restrictions” and declared that the regime “increasingly relied on arbitrary arrests and short-term detentions to restrict the basic rights of its critics, including the right to assemble and move about freely”;

Whereas the regime’s increased repression has grown not only in the number of arrests, but in the intensity of its brutality;

Whereas in the last two years, the regime has murdered other prisoners of conscience in addition to Villar Mendoza, including activists Orlando Zapata Tamayo, Juan Wilfredo Soto Garcia, and Laura Pollan, the inspirational leader of the Ladies in White;

Whereas these brave martyrs are just a few examples of Cuba’s burgeoning dissident movement which has bravely increased its activism and deepened its resolve in the face of unrelenting, vicious attacks; and

Whereas Villar Mendoza forever will be remembered as a symbol by the Cuban people in their struggle against tyranny, and his sacrifice must never be forgotten: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) deeply mourns the tragic loss of Wilman
3 Villar Mendoza and expresses its condolences to his
4 family, the Cuban people, and the victims of repression
5 throughout Cuba;

6 (2) commends the Cuban Patriotic Union, the
7 Ladies in White, the Orlando Zapata Tamayo National
8 Front for Civic Resistance and Civil Disobedience, and other
9 pro-democracy activist organizations in Cuba for their courage
10 and commitment to achieving fundamental liberties despite the
11 tremendous personal risk to them and their families, and
12 the acts of state repudiation that such heroism entails;
13

14 (3) pledges solidarity with the people of Cuba
15 as they struggle against totalitarianism and brutality
16 to achieve fundamental rights such as freedom of expression,
17 association, political parties, and respect for human dignity;
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19 (4) condemns the repression and egregious
20 human rights abuses perpetrated by the Castro regime
21 against its own people; and
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1 (5) affirms that Villar Mendoza, and Cuba's
2 other martyrs in the cause of freedom, forever will
3 be a symbol to the Cuban people in their struggle
4 against tyranny and that their sacrifices will not be
5 forgotten.

